


Shipwrecked or Smooth Sailing? How Elders Protect Us

An Overview of 1 Timothy

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

- Who would be willing—*without naming names!*—to tell us about someone who's faith was "shipwrecked"?

Was it a total surprise, or did you see it coming? In retrospect, what could/should have been done?

- Read 1 Timothy 4:16. "**Paying close attention to**" one's walk with God clearly takes work—but notice the **promised** pay-off! With such a promise, why don't you think **everybody** does it?

- Tell about a time when you observed an elder/pastor helping someone avoid spiritual shipwreck. Was the help well-received/appreciated, or did it appear judgmental (to the recipient)?

Read 1 Timothy 1:19-20. I'm guessing that Hymenaeus and Alexander didn't appreciate Paul's intervention, but notice v. 13. Paul **used to be** a blasphemer (as Hymie and Alex **currently** are). Being "handed over to Satan" sounds harsh, but what is the desired outcome?

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. What was the **desired outcome** of this disciplinary action ("so that", v. 5)?

Read 2 Corinthians 2:6-8. What **resulted** from Paul's disciplinary action?

How do you see love and protection in this disciplinary action?

Afraid you're at risk of shipwreck?
For free biblical hope and help, write to
Counseling@tcc.org

Application-Challenge

- Pray for your elders, for this training, for these potential new leaders.
- Follow your leaders, eagerly, enthusiastically, energetically.
- Have a healthy fear of shipwreck. Keep faith and a clear conscience.
- If you would like to know God personally, contact us at <connect.tcc.org>. Scroll down to the Ministry Information Request section and mark the first or second checkbox. We look forward to helping!

Sermon Summary

For many people, a vacation aboard a sailboat, tucked away in some quiet cove, is a dream come true. But cruises don't always have storybook endings. Shipwreck always is a possibility. Likewise, according to 1 Timothy 1:19, if we're not careful, our faith can become "shipwrecked". We all know someone who used to be enthusiastic, out-spoken, joyous, and serious about their faith, but now they're distant or even hostile. This is shipwrecked faith, and each of us is at risk. Nobody's immune. That's why God, in his love, warns us. And He designed a loving plan for protection against it: godly elders who lead the church. When churches have leaders who carefully walk with Christ, and when those leaders being joyfully and enthusiastically followed, shipwreck is averted and salvation ensured (1 Timothy 4:16). We've seen this to be true time and time again at TCC: dozens of marriages have been pulled back from the brink of divorce; students with anxiety, anger, and cutting are being helped. Shipwrecked faith—as commonplace as it is—is not inevitable.

But the situation elders confront is as simple as simply "pointing out" truths to believers—there are false teachings which actively are being promoted by certain men (1 Timothy 1:3-7). In contrast, our message and our goal is simple and straightforward: love (1 Timothy 1:5). Love is the greatest command, and it flows from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith. A "good conscience" and "sincere faith" also happen to be the keys to not shipwrecking (1 Timothy 1:18-19)! Those are the two options: make it our goal to love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, or, reject faith and a good conscience, and we'll experience a shipwrecked faith.

God has placed elders, to teach, to shepherd, to oversee the flock and help it learn to love (1 Timothy 4:12-16). Notice that Paul places pastors and the rest of the church together "in the same boat", so to speak. Pastors need to watch out for themselves, making sure that they fight the good fight, keep the faith and a good conscience. Because if pastors don't watch themselves, they're just as liable to shipwreck. And, if pastors don't look to their own fight of faith, then they won't be in any position to help the flock keep faith and a good conscience.

The Scriptures present the solution to shipwrecked faith is godly elders who are eagerly followed, TCC has had elders from its very founding. (Remember, biblically speaking an "elder" = a person who "pastors" and who gives "oversight" to a local church.) Some elders are to be paid, because they give their full time and attention to their tasks (1 Timothy 5:17-18), while others, who serve no less honorably, give their part-time eldering service on a volunteer basis. TCC has nine current elders: Doug, George, Aaron, Lanier and I are in that first, full-time (paid) category of elder. Ken Erickson, Greg Schneider, Frank Wiesner, and Jeff Spade are in that part-time category. Together we shepherd and oversee TCC, which is just one little part of God's worldwide household, the church of the Living God, the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). These men protect TCC from false teaching, provide correct teaching, guide TCC through the dangers of an increasingly godless society, and give oversight and leadership to all of TCC's ministries. As a young believer I chafed at elder leadership in my church. I remember thinking, "*They must be control freaks. They're a bottleneck for ministry!*" With a bit more maturity, I now realize that they were just taking seriously their God-given responsibility (Hebrews 13:17).

Because TCC takes seriously the importance of the church, six months ago we invited over a dozen other men to begin training for eldership. The current elders and these elder candidates embarked on an extensive biblical study of eldership. We're doing a bunch of reading, discussing and applying. We hope that some of these men will be called by God to join the ranks of TCC elders. A man may aspire to eldership (1 Timothy 3:1), and if he does, that's a good thing. But it's not up to him—or ultimately to any man—who becomes an elder: God's Holy Spirit gave us the standards of eldership (1 Timothy 3:2-7), he matures men, making them qualified to lead (Galatians 5:22-23), and we trust in God's Holy Spirit to help us identify those men he's chosen (Acts 20:28). God purchased the church with his own blood; it's precious to him. As eldership is strengthened here at TCC, our safety and security will be enhanced, fewer of us will experience shipwreck in our faith, and God will be glorified.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

About five years before Paul wrote Pastor Timothy in Ephesus, he gathered the Ephesian church leaders together for his “going away” message. His words in Acts 20:17-38 give incredible insight into the message of 1 Timothy...

- What did Paul claim about his work among the Ephesians (v. 17-18)?
- Paul was “with the Ephesians”, but **whom** was he serving (v. 19a)?
- **How, with what**, did Paul serve the Lord (v. 19)?
- Describe the difficulties Paul encountered (v. 19 cf. 1 Corinthians 15:30–32; 2 Corinthians 1:8–10).
- Paul describes the **content** he taught the Ephesians as “everything that was profitable”—but what is suggested by the fact that he “didn’t shrink from” declaring it? Why would a pastor be tempted to “shrink” from declaring truth to people? Relate this to the fact that Paul knew he was “serving the Lord”.
- What were the two **contexts** in which Paul taught the Ephesians (v. 20b)? How do you see both these contexts reflected in TCC’s teaching ministry?
- How does v. 21 summarize the gospel? Why does the gospel require **solemn** testimony? “Jews and Greeks” means “100% of humanity”. Did Paul change his gospel for different peoples?
- What **didn’t** Paul know (v. 22)? What **did** Paul know (v. 23)? **Why** do you think Paul shared this? He wasn’t just angling for sympathy—so why tell them this?
- What **didn’t** Paul care about (v. 24a)? What **did** Paul care about (v. 24b)? **Why** do you think Paul shared this? What was he trying to inspire among the Ephesian elders?
- Paul preached “the kingdom” (v. 25). Relate this to what Paul testified to in v. 21.
- **Why** was Paul “innocent of the blood of all men” (v. 26-27)? (Note the word “for”, v. 27)
- Complete the following sentences:
v. 20 “I did not shrink from declaring to you _____.”
v. 27 “I did not shrink from declaring to you _____.”
Comment on the fact that Paul **equated** “everything that is profitable” with “the whole purpose of God”.
- Paul pivots from **his example** of shepherding to **instructions** to the elders for **their** shepherding: How do v. 18-27 illustrate Paul being on guard for himself? for his flock?
Who makes a man an elder/pastor/overseer (v. 28)?
What was the church’s purchase price (v. 28)?
From where do savage wolves come (v. 29)? **From where** do savage wolves come (v. 30)?
How do savage wolves seek to destroy the flock (v. 30b)?
What is able to “build us up and give us an inheritance” (v. 32)?
- **Of what** were the savage wolves going to accuse Paul (v. 33)? How did Paul undercut this accusation (v. 34-35)?
- Contrast v. 36-38 with how Paul used to be (Acts 8:1-3; Galatians 1:13; 1 Timothy 1:13). How powerful is the gospel?!